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ABSTRACT

A course of instruction, including nature and materials of oral decision-making, understanding group dynamics, finding and evaluating facts, steps in problem solving and organization for various forms of discussion is outlined. Through practice with current problems, students can learn leadership and participation in the process of discussion. Presented are: Performance Objectives; Course Content; Teaching Strategies; Learning Activities; Student Resources; Teacher Resources. (NF)

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AUTHORIZED COURSE OF INSTRUCTION FOR THE QUINMESTER PROGRAM

LANGUAGE ARTS

Oral Decision-Making

5114.111
5115.125
5116.126
5175.13

DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DIVISION OF INSTRUCTION • 1971

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Speech

Written by Vivian H. Hicks
for the
DIVISION OF INSTRUCTION
Dade County Public Schools
Miami, Florida
1972

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COURSE NUMBER

5114.111
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COURSE TITLE: ORAL DECISION-MAKING

COURSE DESCRIPTION: A study of the nature and materials of oral decision-making, including the understanding of group dynamics, finding and evaluating facts, steps in problem-solving and organization for various forms of discussion. Through practice with current problems, students gain experience in leadership and participation in the process of discussion.

I. PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

A. The student will examine, through discussion, the importance of oral decision-making in our present culture.

B. Given the clear meanings of intrapersonal decision-making and interpersonal decision-making, the student will indicate the differences between the two types.

C. Given John Dewey's steps in problem-solving, the student will examine some decisions he has made to determine how he used the steps in reflective thinking.

D. The student will discover through discussion participation, the parts played by goals, needs, rationalizations, authority and group pressures in formulating group decisions.

E. The student will analyze the interaction between members of a group of which he is a member.

F. Since practically all human problems can be placed in the goal-obstacle-encounter context, the student will discuss critically the part played by each of these three.

G. The student will formulate criteria by which he may judge any possible solution to a problem.

H. The student will deduce from his experience in this course that sound decision-making techniques may be acquired by individuals.

II. COURSE CONTENT

A. Rationale

Every American is a member of many small groups. We are members of families, work and school groups, social groups and recreational groups. Most of our daily activities are conducted in small group situations. However, there is present in our society a general inability to communicate in a true sense. We are confronted with personal, social, and political problems which can only be solved through effective talking and interaction with people around us.

Each person needs to understand the nature of small groups and to understand his own communication role in each group with which he is involved. It is through interaction with others that ideas are sparked, examined, weighed and tested. Then we are able to evolve some solutions to the many and varied problems that confront us.

This study in oral decision-making should enable students to know themselves better, to develop sensitivity as to how others respond to their verbal messages, to interpret feedback cues from others, and to become effective members of various groups.

B. Range of subject matter

1. The role played by oral decision-making in American society

2. Intrapersonal decision-making

3. Interpersonal decision-making

4. Sensitivity to the rights and needs of others

5. John Dewey's steps in problem-solving (pattern for discussion)

6. Organization for types of discussion: panel (free-flowing and structured), symposium, small group or conference, one leader, and cooperative investigation

7. Planning for discussion

8. Research for discussion

9. Duties of the discussion leader

10. Responsibilities of a good discussant

11. Evaluation for discussion

12. The follow-through after discussion and evaluation

III. TEACHING STRATEGIES

A. Projects

1. Launch a class discussion examining with the student the small groups to which they belong. Some comparison can be made with the variation of groups.

2. A class discussion may be used to trace the part discussion or oral decision-making has played in the creation of our democratic nation. This may be continued to indicate the current problems under discussion by the national or state congress or the local government. The use of discussion for decision-making at school fits well into this format.

3. Exciting discussion may be sparked by setting up an imaginary situation such as the one which follows.

   Begin the session by explaining that the class members have just reached the moon. Some reason has arisen that makes it necessary for them to leave their spaceship to travel some distance away. They must decide what they must take with them in order of priority. Give each student a copy of the list of items which they might need while away from their "lem". Each person is to number the items in order of priority, in their own estimation. When this is completed, ask the students to move into groups of five or six. (This will depend upon the size of the class, of course.) Keeping their lists, have one member act as recorder and write the items in order of their decision. Each item is to be discussed and a majority vote taken to be recorded. Next write the correct list on the board and compare the accuracy of individual lists with group lists. In most instances the group scores are more accurate than the individual scores. This immediately illustrates that group decisions are usually sound. This is the list of items with the order of importance indicated to the right of the item:

Box of matches	14
Food concentrate	4
Five gallons of water	2
Signal flares	10
Life raft	6
Magnetic compass	13
Stellar map (Moon's constellations)	3
Two 45 caliber pistols	11
50 feet of nylon rope	5
Solar powered radio	9
First aid kit containing injection needles	12
Two 100 pound tanks of oxygen	1
One case of dehydrated milk	8
Parachute silk	7

Depending upon student reaction to this activity, devise one or more additional activities of this type to which students may respond. Stress constantly that there is no right or wrong decision, but that decisions must be made for the welfare of the most people at any given time.

B. Writing assignments

This assignment will bring in a little of the intrapersonal decision-making and can serve as material for an interesting discussion in the class. A second advantage will be better understanding of class members. Ask each student to write down one of his strong basic beliefs. Then write a short explanation as to how he came to hold that belief as important. This may be about education, religion, government, society, race, etc. The student should attempt to answer this question: Is this a trustworthy belief?

IV. LEARNING ACTIVITIES

A. Prepare to participate in a class discussion with emphasis on the ways discussion is used in everyday life. This should include the use of sessions of discussion in government and in other areas of life. Give some examples of decisions made. Have these decisions worked in a practical way? You will need some notes to keep you on the topic which is under discussion.

B. Formulate a definition of oral decision-making based upon what you have observed about groups working together. Discuss this definition with classmates. Do you agree on the definition?

C. Arrange with several classmates to discuss some major decision made in American history. Bring out the process of differing opinions, disagreement, compromise, putting the decision into motion as a policy. Use examples to make your discussion interesting to the other members of the class.

D. To illustrate that oral decision-making is not used for public problems alone, plan a role-playing situation about some problem on a personal level. You may use this situation or select one of your own.

You are a teenaged son or daughter trying to persuade your dad to let you go on an unchaperoned trip with several friends. Role play the circumstances of each of the following:

1. Dad, after some tactful inquiries, grants permission.

2. He bluntly refuses.

3. He firmly refuses to grant his permission but, after consulting mother, finally agrees.

During the forum period, discuss better ways of handling the situation. Remember, in role-playing you are concerned with the interpersonal problem and not the acting. Explore other problems of interest in this manner.

E. Have each student bring to class two controversial questions he would like to have discussed. List these on the board and then set up groups for panel discussions (the number of groups will depend on the size of the class, but no groups should have more than five or six members). Each group will choose a chairman and one of the listed topics. Plan together for a discussion in which you will follow Dewey's steps in reflective thinking. Remember

that good group discussion calls for some facts as well as opinions. Prepare well for the discussion. Each group will be assigned a day and a time limit, allowing a period for audience participation. In one discussion period your group might only examine the problem and look at some solutions. The steps of selecting the best possible solution might take too long.

This list of possible topics might be of help to you:

How to relieve the parking problem at school

Desirable changes in high school curriculum

Going along with the gang: When yes? When no?

The present judicial system--Does it need change? What kind?

A critical look at compulsory education

Should our present grading system be changed?

What parents don't understand

Whose business is moral behavior?

Is integration working in America?

Must every person seek a college diploma?

Who should pay for education?

Should Florida adopt the "death with dignity" bill?

Strengths and weaknesses of Student Councils

Any current issue which is controversial makes a lively topic if the group is interested in the area with which it deals.

F. List all the decisions you can remember making during the past 24 hours. Group them into the following categories:

1. Decisions about goals

2. Decisions about specific actions

3. Decisions relating to here and now

4. Decisions relating to the future

5. Decisions that were pleasant

6. Decisions that were unpleasant

How did you arrive at these decisions? Were they decided in an intrapersonal manner or interpersonal manner?

G. Plan a one-leader type discussion and select a topic or question with the class. Use about one half of the class time in the discussion. During the other part of the class time examine together the effectiveness of the discussion. Did each person participate? Was there a spirit of cooperation felt? Were the class members thoughtful of the rights of others? Was each person polite, even in disagreement? Why are these questions important?

H. Set up five or six conference groups within your class. Ask each group to select a current problem for discussion. Assign each group to select a chairman, discuss the problem, propose a solution--in a specific length of time. Your teacher will circulate, making notes of behavior within each group. Later these will be evaluated and discussed with the class. When the time is up, the chairmen will take turns announcing the problem and the solutions. The groups will then discuss the pertinent aspects of group communication.

I. Select a topic and organize a panel discussion to be presented to the class. Half of the groups should plan to follow the method of allowing class participation <u>after</u> the panel has finished, and the other half should allow participation by the audience <u>during</u> the presentation. Compare the effectiveness of the two types of participation.

J. Select one problem which concerns members of the group. Divide into groups of five or six people. Each group will select a chairman and a recorder. The discussion groups all hold their small groups simultaneously. At a given time, have the groups reassemble. The recorders will then read each of the solutions adopted by the various groups. Take a majority vote to determine which solution seems to be most desirable.

K. Hold a Phillips 66 buzz session on one of the topics below or one selected by the class. Remember that in a "66," groups of six students put their heads together for six minutes and try to come up with a recommendation.

How to raise money for the forensics program

How to improve the school paper

How to use unstructured time most effectively

How to gain community support for school activities

L. Hold a prepared panel discussion on a question of policy which requires outside reading and research. Bring to class a one-page outline listing two or three causes of the problem, and one or two solutions with evidence. Hold the discussion. Other members of the class, the audience, will participate in the question period.

M. Divide the class into small groups (five or six people). Each group will meet and decide on a question of value or problem of value for discussion and will elect a chairman. Together the chairman and the group will outline the main points to be discussed. Do not rehearse the discussion. Follow this procedure in class presentation:

1. Introduction by chairman

2. Panel discussion led by chairman, lasting 15 or 20 minutes

3. Participation by the forum for 10 or 15 minutes

4. Evaluation by your teacher

N. Hold a similar symposium-forum. Allow each symposium member three minutes to speak on his particular topic.

O. You have recognized by this time that discussion may be looked at in two ways: (1) as social interaction and (2) as problem-solving behavior. The first of these places the emphasis on learning to understand each other. Why is this an important aspect of discussion? When we develop trust in another person or other persons we change behavior. Examine your own development of trust through knowledge of the other person. The following dimensions of behavior should result: (1) accepting the

influence of others, (2) accepting the motives of others, (3) accepting the deviant behavior of others, (4) nonconformity to group opinion, (5) increased communication with others, (6) increased communication of one's personal opinions, and (7) increased liking for others. Make an honest appraisal of your learning and determine if these aspects of behavior have resulted for you. This is a personal study project, but you should be honest with yourself. If you find that you have failed to achieve this behavior, continue to work toward understanding and accepting other people.

P. Listen to one of the panel discussions in your class and draw a flow sheet showing the interaction or withdrawal of group members.

Q. Invite a two man team of debaters to come to your class. Appoint a class chairman to introduce the debaters and to direct the forum period following. In evaluating this activity, consider, from the questions asked of the debaters, how well the individuals in the audience were thinking.

R. Independent study

1. Attend several meetings of the student council or the city council. Write a report on the techniques of good discussion which were demonstrated. Did communication break down at any point? If so, can you figure out what caused the breakdown? Did the individual personalities stand out, although this was a group at work? Were any problems or issues solved?

2. Through thought, observation and research write a short paper in which you establish sound reasons for the behaviorical science expert's interest in the field of discussion and group problem-solving.

S. Optional activities

Quite often some occurrence, situation or experience will form the basis for a discussion. These are referred to as cases. The participants in a case discussion will raise questions and discuss them. The case may concern honesty or some personal conduct. Find a case or use one from your own experience and direct a case discussion in your class.

Example case: (This is the sketch, but it may be told in more detail.)

> A high school student was studying in the library. He felt more comfortable leaning over his book, so he sat on the carpet with his back against the side of the carrel. There were no other students in that area and all was quiet. A librarian told him that he was not sitting correctly. After some discussion--not angry discussion--she told the student that he could leave the library, sit at the carrel with feet under it or go down and discuss the problem with the assistant principal for administration. He chose to go to talk in the office. When he arrived he was given a warning, a disciplinary card was written up and he was not allowed to explain that he wanted to talk with the administrator. This upset him very much. What should he have done? etc.?

V. STUDENT RESOURCES

A. State-adopted textbooks

Elson, E. Floyd, et al. The Art of Speaking, 2nd ed. Boston: Ginn and Co., 1966. (Chapter 17, pp. 331-349)

Hibbs, Paul, et al. Speech for Today. New York: Webster Division, McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1965. (Chapter 5, pp. 74-96)

Lamars, William and Joseph M. Standocher. The Speech Arts. Chicago: Lyons and Carnahan, 1966. (Chapter 14)

B. Non-state-adopted supplementary materials

Gorden, William I. "Tape Exchange in Discussion Methods Course," The Southern Speech Journal, Vol. 30 (Spring 1965) pp. 231-236.

Griffin, Kim. "Interpersonal Trust in Small-Group Communication," Quarterly Journal of Speech, Vol. 53 (October 1967) pp. 224-234.

Hall, D. M. Dynamics of Group Action, 3rd ed. Danville, Illinois: The Interstate Printers and Publishers, Inc., 1964 (A useful book which deals with the analysis of group behavior)

Harnack, R. Victor. "John Dewey and Discussion," Western Speech, Vol. 32 (Spring 1968) pp. 137-149.

Johnson, Wendell. People in Quandaries. New York: Harper and Row, 1946. (A very readable book about the problems people have in communicating with each other)

Mortensen, Calvin D. "Should the Discussion Group Have an Assigned Leader?" The Speech Teacher, Vol. 15 (January 1966) pp. 34-41.

Nelson, Theodore F. "We're Failing to Teach Effective Talking," Today's Education, (October 1971) p. 43. (Stresses importance of small group and informal discussion)

Phelps, Waldo and Milton Dobkin. "Problem-Solving Discussion in High School Civics," The Speech Teacher, Vol. 6 (November 1957) pp. 305-314.

Phillips, Gerald M. Communication and the Small Group. Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966.

Phillips, Gerald M. and Eugene C. Erickson. Interpersonal Dynamics in the Small Group. New York: Random House, 1970.

Reid, Loren. Teaching Speech, 3rd ed. Columbia, Missouri: Artcraft Press, 1960, pp. 167-195. (Suggestions for appraising discussion are given on pp. 188-189.)

Scheidel, Thomas M. and Laura Crowell. "Feedback in Small Group Communications," Quarterly Journal of Speech, Vol. 52 (October 1966) pp. 273-278.

Robinson, Karl F. and Charlotte Lee. Speech in Action. Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1965. (Chapter 13 pp. 162-179. There is a checklist for discussion on p. 178.)

Walter, Otis M. and Robert L. Scott. Thinking and Speaking, A Guide to Intelligent Oral Communication, 2nd ed. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1969. (Chapter 14, "Discussing Problems and Values" pp. 233-250)

VI. TEACHER RESOURCES

A. Textbooks (See student list)

B. Professional books and periodicals

Anderson, Martin P. "A Model of Group Discussion," The Southern Speech Journal, Vol. 30 (Summer 1965) pp. 279-293. (This article presents a broad conceptual model of discussion, which is viewed as a system of communicative and adaptative behavior.)

Baird, A. Craig. Argumentation and Debate. New York: McGraw-Hill Co., Inc., 1950. (Part Three, pp. 253-303.)

Becker, Samuel L., John Waite Bowers, and Bruce E. Gronbeck. Part Two "Video Tape in Teaching Discussion," The Speech Teacher, Vol. 17 (March 1968) pp. 104-106.

Berne, Eric. Games People Play. Grove Press, 1964. (This small paperback can be purchased at most stores where paperbacks are sold. It was written by a psychiatrist. He analyzes the psychology of human relationships.)

Borman, Ernest G. Theory and Practice. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1969. (Part Two of this book is more thoroughly based on behavioral research than most books on discussion.)

Allen, R. R., Sharol Anderson, Jere Hough. Speech in American Society. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1968. (Part Five: "Group Processes in American Society" pp. 435-455. This book deals with interpersonal communication in small groups.)

Auer, J. Jeffery. Brigance's Speech Communication, 3rd ed. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Division of Meredith Corp., 1967 (Paperback) (Chapter 9 pp. 164-179).

Barnland, Dean C. and S. Haiman Franklin. The Dynamics of Discussion. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1959. (A view of discussion from the standpoint of interpersonal relationship)

Braden, Waldo W. and Earnest Brandenburg. Oral Decision-Making. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1955.

Dewey, John. How We Think. Boston: D. C. Heath Co., 1910. (Although this is an old book nothing supersedes it on the patterns of reflective thinking.)

Eisenson, Jan and Paul H. Boase. Basic Speech, 2nd ed. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1967. (Chapter 11 pp. 223-243.)

Garland, J. V. Discussion Methods Explained and Illustrated, 3rd ed., revised. New York: The H. W. Wilson Co., 1951. (There is material on formal and informal discussion and each form is illustrated. It is still quite excellent.)

Hedde, Brigance, Powell. The New American Speech, revised edition. New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1963. (Chapter 12 pp. 187-199.)

Homans, George C. Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms. New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1961.

Oliver, Robert T. and Rupert L. Cortright. New Training for Effective Speech, revised, 1970. New York: Henry Holt and Co.

Smith, Donald Hugh. "Teaching Speech to the Culturaliy Disadvantaged," The Speech Teacher, Vol. 15 (March 1966) pp. 140-144. (Section on oral decision-making is found in the first column on page 144.)

Smith, William S. Group Problem-Solving through Discussion. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Publishing Co., 1965.

Zima, Joseph P. "Self-Analysis Inventory: An Interpersonal Communication Exercise," The Speech Teacher, Vol. 20 (March 1971) pp. 108-114.

C. Films

Discussion Technique.	28' B&W S UW	1-31310
Group Discussion.	10' B&W JS MH	1-04532